

**This Week in Congress**

*November 9, 2009*

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress."

**Health Care Reform**

On Saturday night, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 3962, Speaker Pelosi's health care reform bill. This bill passed the House by a 220 - 215 vote at 11:15 p.m. EST. I opposed this legislation. After studying the over 2,000 page health care bill, listening to the concerns of Kansans, and visiting Kansas hospitals to speak with doctors, nurses, patients, and administrators, I concluded that this bill will be harmful to Kansans. [Click here](#) to read my full statement explaining my opposition to this bill.

As Chairman of the House Rural Health Care Coalition, I know how important health care is to the survival of Kansas towns. Our state has unique health care needs, different from much of the country, and we have an aging population that is spread widely across a large area. But, the Speaker's bill contains billions in cuts to Medicare, which will reduce benefits and raise premiums for seniors, fails to reduce health care costs, grows the government and explodes the deficit. Unfortunately, it will also diminish health care for Kansans.

On Friday, I spoke on the House floor regarding this bill. [Click here](#) to view my remarks.. On Saturday evening, during the floor debate over H.R. 3962, I again went to the House floor to express my opposition to this legislation.

[Click here](#)

to view these remarks. During the health care reform debate over the past several months, I have written about my ideas for health care reform and have shared them with folks back home and anyone in Washington who will listen.

[Click here](#)

to read my ideas. Thanks to all the people who called and wrote to provide their thoughts on this important issue. On Saturday, I was able to personally take calls from Kansans to my Washington office and visit with them about their concerns prior to my vote on H.R. 3962.

Following House passage of H.R. 3962, the issue of health care reform now moves to the Senate, where the outcome is uncertain. Senate Majority Leader Reid (D-NV) has indicated that he would like to try and complete a health care overhaul bill in the Senate this year, but recent reports have indicated that this process may slip into next year. If the Senate does pass a health care reform bill, it is likely to be drastically different from the measure the House passed on Saturday. This would set the stage for a contentious conference committee of members from both the House and Senate to resolve disagreements between the two

measures and produce one piece of legislation. If the conference committee does agree on a bill, this measure would then go back to the House and the Senate for a vote in each chamber.

### **"House Call" on the Capitol Steps**

On Thursday, I participated in a "House Call" on Washington to oppose H.R. 3962, Speaker Pelosi's health care reform bill. As the House of Representatives approached a vote on the bill, citizens from across the country came to Washington, D.C., in united opposition to the measure. An event was organized in less than a week where at least 10,000 Americans came to Capitol Hill to voice their opposition to a government expansion in our health care system. Several groups of Kansans who traveled to Washington for the event visited me in my office throughout the day. [Click here](#) to read my statement about this event. [Click here](#) to see photos from the event.

### **Flu Vaccine Manufacturers**

This week, I met with representatives from GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) to discuss my concerns regarding shortages of both the seasonal flu and H1N1 flu vaccines in Kansas. GSK is one of the three companies contracted to produce approximately 100 million of the United States' expected 114 million doses of this year's seasonal flu vaccine. I requested the meeting to receive an update on these issues so that I may relay accurate information to Kansans and

health organizations within the state. I was told that the lack of timely supply of seasonal flu vaccine is a result of early demand for the vaccine and the allocation of resources committed to producing the new H1N1 vaccine. However, manufactures are expected to completely fill and deliver all seasonal flu vaccine orders. Regarding the H1N1 vaccine, I am concerned with the delay in delivering this vaccine on time. We need to have adequate amounts of this vaccine available to Kansans in certain priority groups and for the country as a whole. I continue to insist on greater efforts to meet these needs. [Click here](#) to read more about my request to meet with vaccine manufacturers.

### **House Hunger Caucus Examines Food Deserts**

Access to grocery stores and the healthy food they sell is critical for every community's viability and the health of its residents. On Wednesday, I participated in a House Hunger Caucus briefing on food deserts in rural and urban America. Food deserts can be defined as areas with limited access to affordable and nutritious food. These areas are typically characterized by the absence of a grocery store.

During the briefing, the Hunger Caucus heard from several experts, including David Procter, the Director of the Center for Engagement and Community Development at K-State. David spoke about the Rural Grocery Store Sustainability Initiative and the challenges rural grocers face, as well as potential ways to keep grocery stores open in small towns. A grocery store is a cornerstone for any rural community. It is not only a place to purchase food and necessities close to home, but it also serves as a social institution for the community. As a co-chair of the House Hunger Caucus, I appreciated learning more about this issue. Thanks to David for his work on behalf of small towns in our state.

### **Welcoming Veterans to World War II Memorial**

This week, I greeted another Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. A group of 35 veterans and 20 sponsors from central Kansas came to our nation's capital on a trip to see the memorial that pays tribute to their service and sacrifice. Honor Flight works against time to thank our World War II veterans for their service. Many of these veterans are in their 80s and 90s and unable physically or financially to visit our nation's capital to see the World War II Memorial on their own. Honor Flight ( <http://www.honorflight.org/> ) helps make trips for these veterans possible. Welcoming these veterans is an incredible privilege and one of the most rewarding experiences of my time in Congress. [Click here](#) to view photos.

### **Every Nation Has Right to Defend Its People**

I spoke to the House of Representatives on Tuesday about the right every nation has to defend its people when attacked. For eight years, terrorists launched thousands of rockets and mortars at civilians in Israel. At the end of 2008, Israel responded by taking steps to clear the terrorist threat and protect its people. Yet, the United Nations Human Rights Council produced a report that was highly critical of Israel's actions and accused the country of purposely targeting civilians despite Israel's efforts to avoid civilian casualties and the humanitarian assistance to civilians Israel facilitated. I encouraged my colleagues to stand up for the basic right of self-defense. [Click here](#) to watch my remarks.

### **Visiting with Dennis Newell of Emporia Middle School**

On Friday, I visited with Dennis Newell of Emporia Middle School. Dennis has been selected for an Albert Einstein Distinguished Educator Fellowship. Dennis has been an EMS teacher since 1980. He has taught math, science and currently teaches Explorations in Technology. He was selected for an 11-month fellowship at the National Science Foundation in Arlington, VA. This fellowship will allow Mr. Newell the opportunity to gain knowledge about educational policy and a chance to work with some of the nation's premier experts in education and science, technology, engineering and mathematics. He is one of the first two educators from Kansas to be chosen. [Click here](#) to view a photo.

### **2009 Service Academy Selection Board**

This week, I announced my Service Academy Selection Board for 2009. Each fall, I have the opportunity to make appointments to the United States Service Academies. I select a 16-member board that interviews students seeking a nomination to attend West Point, the Merchant Marine Academy, the Air Force Academy or the Naval Academy. The 2009 board is an outstanding group of military personnel and civic leaders. This year the Service Academy Selection Board will meet to interview candidates on Saturday, November 21, 2009, at the Eisenhower Presidential Library in Abilene. [Click here](#) to view the members of the board.

### **Announcing Manhattan as the New Location for Federal Research Lab**

In a press conference hosted by the city of Manhattan on Monday, I joined Senator Sam Brownback, Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins and leaders from Kansas State University, Kansas Bioscience Authority, and the state of Kansas to announce the relocation of the Arthropod-Borne Animal Disease Research Laboratory (ABADRL) to Manhattan. The ABADRL is a federal research lab that works with livestock diseases spread by insects and arachnids, such as ticks and mosquitoes. Manhattan was chosen as the new location, following a site selection process, due to its location in the world-leading animal health corridor and because of the partnership with Kansas State University, a global leader in animal health research. Earlier this year, Congress approved \$1.5 million to move the ABADRL from Laramie, Wyo., to Manhattan. This lab will better protect humans, the U.S. food supply and our nation's livestock.

### **In the Office**

Liane Connelly of Hays, Mary Carol Pomatto of Pittsburg, Kathleen Harr and Monica Scheibmeir of Topeka, Nelda Godfrey of Kansas City and Susan Larson of Olathe were in with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing to discuss expanding the nursing workforce in both clinical and educational settings. Michelle Morgan of La Crosse was in with the Northwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging to support nutrition assistance for seniors. Leon Trammell of Wichita stopped by to visit.

Melinda Walker of Wichita was in with the Heartland Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) to talk about the organization's efforts to help small businesses navigate government contracting. Mark Weaver of Hill City was in with the National Park Service to update me on the Nicodemus National Historic Site. Horace and Janet Patterson of Conway Springs and Ronnie Stopfer of Junction City were in to visit. Jeff Seibel of Hays, Matt McAvoy and Julia Stoll of Overland Park, and Etta McKenzie and Karin Page of Kansas City were in with Agents for Change to discuss pending legislation that would assist life insurance companies with administrative issues.

Terry and Sonja Brigman of Hutchinson visited my Washington, D.C., office this week to receive a tour of the U.S. Capitol.

Very truly yours,

Jerry